

'Highly inappropriate': Shane Rattenbury lashes Labor, defends handling of Johnathan Davis allegations

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Greens leader Shane Rattenbury has defended his party's handling of allegations levelled at Johnathan Davis, who resigned late on Sunday days after being suspended indefinitely while the party examined claims he had sex with a minor and an inappropriate relationship with a 17-year-old.

Mr Rattenbury said Deputy Chief Minister Yvette Berry's comments on Sunday night, expressing ACT Labor's concern at the Greens' handling of the allegations, was "highly inappropriate".

"Frankly, I am dismayed by the Deputy Chief Minister's statement last night," Mr Rattenbury said.

The Greens leader said the party would reflect on its handling of the allegations but said he thought it had got to police "in a reasonably short time".

"Our understanding was that this was not a current matter, this was a historical question," Mr Rattenbury said.

"And so part of our judgement was there was not an immediate issue of safety for a young person, because these were considered to have been matters that had taken place in the past."



📷 Greens leader Shane Rattenbury at the Legislative Assembly on Monday.

Picture by Karleen Minney

The ACT Greens on Monday released an internal review of allegations made against Mr Davis, in which Mr Rattenbury's chief of staff concluded Mr Davis had "undertaken activity which may be considered unethical and inappropriate, which does not align with community expectations and is likely to bring himself and the ACT Greens into disrepute".

Mr Rattenbury also revealed Mr Davis had been counselled a "couple of years ago" for having a relationship that was "not acceptable" with a staff member who worked in the Legislative Assembly.



Greens leader Shane Rattenbury, centre, addresses allegations against Johnathan Davis on Monday, flanked, from left, by Rebecca Vassarotti, Jo Clay, Andrew Braddock and Emma Davidson. Picture by Karleen Minney

The Greens, which governs in coalition with Labor, has faced criticism for its handling of the allegations and the speed with which it reported what it knew to police.

The Canberra Times on Friday revealed Mr Davis had been indefinitely suspended from his party after being accused of having sex with a 15-year-old and an inappropriate, but not illegal, relationship with a 17-year-old.

Mr Davis, who resigned late on Sunday night from the Legislative Assembly and the party, is "very distressed and receiving considerable support from family and friends", the party said.

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Mr Rattenbury said Mr Davis, by resigning, had clearly understood the seriousness of these matters, but later added Mr Davis had told him he believed he had done nothing illegal.

Greens minister Emma Davidson was made aware of some allegations a week before Mr Rattenbury, who found out on Monday, November 6. The party met with an 18-year-old man who detailed his relationship with Mr Davis the next day.

The party referred this information to police at 10am on Friday, November 10, it said.

Mr Rattenbury said the Greens did not know the identity of a 15-year-old who Mr Davis is alleged to have had sex with. The allegation, if proved, would amount to a criminal offence.

Mr Rattenbury on Monday said he stood by the party's approach of taking a couple of days to try to understand the situation, consider the party's responsibilities and "balance the various pressures and competing obligations that were placed on us".

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"We took an approach we thought was appropriate. The information that first came to us - I don't seek to, in any way denigrate the nature of it, but it came to us in a form that was what one might consider to be a rumour," he said.

"We work in an area where rumours circulate frequently. People often circulate rumours in this environment. And we decided that we needed to have some degree of confidence that we were simply not acting on what could be an untrue rumour.

"There was some degree of confidence that we should take this further."

Mr Rattenbury was sharply critical of Ms Berry's statement that the ACT Labor caucus had questions for the Greens on how the matter was handled.

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"Every single member of Labor caucus has my telephone number and my email address. Not one of them contacted me across the course of the weekend or Friday to ask a single question. I saw [Labor minister Mick] Gentleman at a public event yesterday. He did not ask me a question," he said.

"I think one needs to look at the Labor party's statement last night and question the Labor party's integrity on this matter. For them to try and create a political advantage out of the most difficult and sensitive issue my party has ever faced reflects very poorly."

Mr Rattenbury said the Greens rang the Labor party early on Friday morning to tell them what was going on.

"They do not run my party. I do not have to answer to the Labor party. I shared information with them," he said.

"I didn't know they had further questions because they said, 'Thank you for letting us know' and we had not heard from them since, just to clarify a couple of points."

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